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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000012

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: WASIT ELECTION RESULTS REACTION: UIA/555 SAVORS CONFIRMATION
OF OVERWHELMING VICTORY

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REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Members of the Shi'a Islamist United Iraqi Alliance/555 list savored the overwhelming victory of their slate after election results were announced on January 20. The UIA/555 won seven of the eight seats allocated to the province, with Ayad Allawi's National Iraqi List/671 picking up the remaining seat (biographic information to follow septel). Unsurprisingly, representatives of the UIA/555 slate, led by Wasit Deputy Governor Mohammed al-Khateeb, hailed the election as free and fair, while Allawi officials again expressed their bitterness and frustration over alleged improprieties. Wasit representatives, with the possible exception of the al-Khateeb, are all relatively unknown and will likely maintain a low profile in Baghdad as coalition negotiations continue and the new assembly begins its work. END SUMMARY.

TRIUMPH CONFIRMED: WASIT UIA/555 REPS PLAN FOR FUTURE

¶2. (C) Wasit Deputy Governor Mohammed al-Khateeb, leader of the Wasit UIA/555 list, in conversations with Regional Embassy Office staff, was overjoyed at the confirmation of his slate's electoral success, calling the elections a "successful experiment for the Iraqi and Arab nation.". Al-Khateeb indicated that he supported all attempts to form a national unity government incorporating the views of all Iraqis. However, he also related his frustration with Sunni Arab slates that, in his opinion, were attempting to exert more influence than their share of the election results warranted. Al-Khateeb was dismissive of Alawi claims of electoral fraud, asserting that the UIA/555 list was also the victim of dirty tricks and fraud and that the level of fraud was not enough to impact the result of the elections.

¶3. (C) Fadhila party member Dr. Basim Sharif also dismissed allegations of fraud and manipulation. Sharif is currently a member of the TNA, and the only Fadhila member from Wasit awarded a seat on December 15. He declined to comment on the commitment of his party to remain a member of the UIA/555. Sharif also indicated that Fadhila party head Nadim Al-Jabari would soon drop his bid to become Prime Minister and cede his support to Adel Abid Al-Mehdi.

ALLAWI SLATE BITTER BUT RESIGNED

¶4. (C) Representatives of former Interim Prime Minister Ayad

Allawi's National Iraqi List/671 continued to level claims that their candidates had been unfairly disadvantaged by the tactics of the UIA/555, complaining of voter intimidation, character defamation, and illegal removal of campaign posters. Shaykh Jamal Abd Al-Mehdi Batik, the only member of the National Iraqi List from Wasit to secure a place in the new parliament, and outgoing TNA member Shaykh Ma'ad Jasim Mizher al-Sumarmed expressed their frustration not only with their opponents, but the unwillingness, in their opinion, of the IECI and international observers to condemn illegal tactics and campaigning. That said, Shaykh Jamal conceded the results of the election were final and that it was "time to move on". He also urged the U.S. to use its influence to prevent candidates with militia ties from controlling the security ministries.

WASIT GOVERNOR: I WAS A CANDIDATE?

15. (C) Wasit Governor Lateef Turfa, in a meeting on January 22, continued to distance himself from his decision to run as candidate on the slate of Prime Minister Ja'afari's spokesman Laith Kubba. According to Turfa, his decision was a personal favor to Kubba. In general, Turfa was extremely pleased with the fairness and efficiency of the election and thought the results accurately reflected the political opinions of Wasit. The Governor preferred to focus on what he thought were his excellent ties with PM Ja'afari and recent promises from the central government for increased funding for Wasit. (NOTE: Since PM Ja'afari's visit to Wasit in December, rumors abound in Wasit that Governor Turfa may move to Baghdad to take a position in a Ja'afari led government. END NOTE.)

16. COMMENT. The release of the official election results merely confirms the overwhelmingly dominant position Shi'a Islamist parties' hold over Wasit. As a group, the new parliamentarians--with the possible exception of Deputy Governor Al-Khateeb--are relatively unknown. In any case, both the elected

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representative and the voters of Wasit province have high expectations that the new government will bring results for what they feel is a neglected corner of Iraq. At this point, a major role on the national stage for any member of the Wasit delegation would be surprising. As the glow of the election victory fades and planned local elections approach, rival constituent elements of the UIA--in particular the Badr Organization and the Sadrists--will be hard-pressed to prevent renewed tensions that have been the flashpoint for past violence in the province. The outlook for secular parties remains bleak.
END COMMENT.
FONTENEAU